

SAR EVAL Results

Written by Emerson Smith
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SC Wing Passes USAF Evaluated SAR

Columbia SOUTH CAROLINA - Every two years, the SC Wing is graded by the USAF on its performance on a simulated mission involving multiple sorties with multiple aircraft and multiple ground teams operating simultaneously. This year's mission involved an aircraft downed in the aftermath of an earthquake. There were multiple ELT beacons, providing a challenge for the IC as to where to send air crews and ground teams and what kinds of searches to conduct.

In the midst of real afternoon thunderstorms, IC Capt Billy Geier and his staff worked to perhaps save a life in a downed aircraft and to save lives of passengers in a missing kayak during the exercise which took place at wing headquarters on Friday, 25 April and Saturday 26 April 2008

In the end, the USAF evaluators passed the SC Wing on its ability to safely and effectively conduct USAF missions, giving the wing the right to continue to conduct A, B, and C missions. Of course, the SC Wing mission staff wasn't satisfied with simply a "pass". "We would have preferred getting a higher rating, but we found that we have several areas of needed improvement. We all know what we could have done better. We're going to start doing tabletop exercises involving complex scenarios, such as those we might have in a real search and rescue mission," said Capt Geier.

LtCol Lewis Strough, the MELR Commander, gave his personal coin as rewards to four members of mission staff who went beyond the call of duty. Communications was singled out as "outstanding", with Capt Boykin Roseborough and 2Lt Brad Lee each getting a MELR Commander's coin. Others receiving coins in the day-and-a-half mission were 1Lt Mike Ragin for his role as the safety officer and for LtCol Dave Friedenbergl. LtCol Gene Sullivan was praised by the USAF evaluators for his well-flown CD mission on Friday.

"We congratulate these USAF-recognized mission staff members for their excellent work under difficult circumstances. They provided the support so that the air crews and ground crews could do their work efficiently and safely. We had all the mission capable aircraft and vans that we needed. Those who prepared these aircraft and vans prior to bringing them to the exercise are to be commended. I thank Capt Geier for his work and that of mission staff and the USAF evaluators," said Col Emerson Smith, the SC Wing Commander.

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